

keep our facilities safe whether it was our swimming pools, playgrounds, or all our playing fields; our users needed to know we were doing our best to keep things safe for them.

I always tried to be more of a teacher which I guess is also a mentor. With all the wonderful people I had the opportunity to work with over my career, I always tried to pass along the things that had been passed along to me by the wonderful mentors I had in my life.

Because these people helped push me along I was able to pursue my passion of athletic field maintenance. Of course I had a few other responsibilities as well, but my passion was always caring for the facilities where baseball players could get a hit or make a stunning defensive play, or where a football team could do everything correctly and score a touchdown, or a lacrosse, soccer or field hockey player could score a goal.

I left the Air Force and got into the Park and Recreation profession at just the right time, when soccer was growing at an insane rate. I have seen the same now with lacrosse and field hockey as well, each required some education and cultural practice tweaks to make these fields as safe as possible.

At the start of my career I lucky enough to attend an educational conference hosted by Eric Madisen and the *Park and Grounds* magazine staff, and I also attended the Midwest Turfgrass Conference at Purdue University. At these two sessions I had the opportunity to meet Dr. William Daniel and a gentleman known as Harry C. Gill, aka "Pops or Gramps." Harry had been a golf course superintendent when Bud Selig, then the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers, talked Harry into taking over the care of the old County Stadium turf and infield. Harry knew turf, but not infield management. So he started making phone calls.

Doc Daniel was a Turf and Agronomy professor at Purdue and was the man who came up with the idea that became the Prescription Athletic Turf System (PAT) system. I was very lucky that these two men took me under their wing and truly helped me grow professionally and in my knowledge of turf maintenance.

As Harry's quest for athletic field management knowledge grew, a gentleman from Minnesota contacted Harry and became a friend and mentor. Dick Ericson had been the head groundskeeper at Old Metropolitan Stadium in Minneapolis and then he moved over to the Humphrey Dome and managed that until his retirement. And one other gentlemen from down in Kansas City shared information with Harry—his name was George Toma.

As the four of these men shared information and questions they thought an avenue was needed to share athletic field information. The first real sports turf session was held at Doc's Midwest Clinic, which had always been golf-oriented. That first session had more than 100 people attend and Doc knew his program did not have enough room to allow this group to grow.

Harry and Eric Madisen worked up an agreement to host the sessions at Eric's annual educational seminars for parks and schools employees and a new session dealing with Sports Field maintenance was born. The numbers grew and the four men's sharing of ideas grew to become what is now known as the Sports Turf Managers Association.

These four men took me in, shared information and ideas and helped challenge me; Harry was known to my kids as "Gramps" and they loved him and I did as well, he was a good friend and one of my mentors. So was Doc Daniels, who often times when in Chicago would just drop in and see how I was doing. I could always call Dick or George if I had a problem and they would give me their ideas on how to solve the issue;

Continued on page 44

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“Ad” dollars to your bottom line

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS turf managers don't have to look far to understand the importance of advertising on their team's and facility's revenue streams. Public and private facilities not affiliated with professional sports may have more difficulty getting a piece of this very large pie. Let's take a brief look at the history of advertising in sports facilities. Then we can consider some opportunities to tap the advertising market. I'll provide some tips on how to close deals. Finally, I'll show how to calculate competitive rates.

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Advertisers have long understood the value of associating with athletics. Some athletic venues, however, have been reluc-

▲ DAVID KIMEL

tant to “spoil” their pristine parks, pools, rinks, and other venues with advertising. Public schools are among the last hold-outs, an interesting phenomenon considering the pressure on school budgets. Many schools have cut athletic programs at the same time they have refused to allow advertising that would have supported them. The simple answer to selling school boards is a slow introduction of advertising. Start with a new scoreboard. Next consider the back of the press box. If your Little League Field has signs on their fence, ask to put them on your school's outfield fences.

For many, the first advertising we saw at a sports venue may have been those signs on the fence of the Little League Park for the local bakery. Most of us didn't look at it as advertising. Rather we thought it was more an acknowledgment of the \$100 contribution the baker made because his son was the first baseman. Reality is, the only difference between that sign and the huge sign for a

national food product at a professional baseball stadium is...“zero.” Actually, the difference is several zeros. The Little League sign may be seen by hundreds. The Major League sign will be seen by millions. Not surprisingly, the Little League sign cost hundreds while the Major League sign may cost hundreds of thousands (or even millions depending on terms). Sponsors of Major League Park advertising have large and expensive advertising agencies that analyze every ad purchase. If these experts consider this a sound advertising investment, it should be clear that advertising at your athletic facility will also be a sound investment by simply changing the number of zeros.

Advertising value is determined based on three primary considerations:

Target Audience. While some businesses want to reach “everybody,” most would prefer to target their dollars to reach their best prospects without wasting money giving exposure to people who are not good prospects. If a business is advertising on TV

While some businesses want to reach “everybody,” most would prefer to target their dollars to reach their best prospects without wasting money giving exposure to people who are not good prospects.

to reach children, they’ll buy time on Saturday morning children’s programs. Similarly, you should develop your sales presentation to show how different options reach different target audiences.

Cost per exposure. Businesses want to know how much it will cost to reach a given number of people. The simplest form of this is calculated as Cost Per Thousand. If a newspaper ad will be seen by 10,000 people and the ad costs \$500, the cost per thousand is \$20. The trick, when competing with newspapers, is to recognize that only a small percentage of newspaper readers will even notice any given advertisement. Of those, a smaller

percentage will read the ad. An even smaller percentage will be within the advertiser’s primary target group. Here’s a test. Name five advertisers you noticed in the last newspaper you read. Of the five you noticed, how many did you read? Now think about being on the sidelines of a football game. You can’t help but notice the advertisement on the scoreboard or on the front of the bleachers.

Retention. Retention of an advertisement is difficult to measure. We know, and common sense would confirm, that people retain information better when they see it repeatedly over an extended period of time. Consider, therefore, the re-

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Calculation of Cost Per Thousand Impressions For A Very Small Facility With Limited Use

Spectators per varsity game x number of games	2,000 x 8	16,000
Spectators per junior varsity game x number of games	750 x 8	6,000
Spectators per freshman game x number of games	500 x 6	3,000
Number of athletes x practices and games	100 x 30	3,000
Number of team officials and support staff x practices, games, and prep	50 x 50	2,500
Practice spectators and casual stadium users		3,000
Total impression		33,500
Cost per thousand for a \$500 sign		\$14.92

Are your games broadcast or rebroadcast on Local Access TV? Will the sign be visible in the background? If so, don't forget to add these numbers. How about the background of newspaper game photos?

tention of a single 30-second TV ad versus looking at that well placed sign for the local bakery every time your kid's team gets past midfield.

The advertising opportunities at a sports venue are vast. Don't look only at scoreboards and fence lines. Consider the front of the snack bar. While the inside of the fence is great for the spectators, how many people drive by and could see the outside of the fence? Could you place banners on parking lot poles? Don't forget the rise of each step on your bleachers. Have you ever seen a Zamboni at an ice rink without an advertisement on it? How about the roof of your service vehicles? You've seen them in restaurants so why

not have ads on the wall in front of your urinals? Is there a track surrounding your field? Tracks are easy to paint (but not easy to erase). Don't forget the Public Address announcer. If Joe the Plumber has an ad on the fence and is then mentioned during a game, all his buddies will be sure to make a comment to him and he'll feel better about his investment. [It would be a good idea to check local ordinances to be sure there are no restriction regards signs that might apply.]

Developing a sale presentation to offer and solicit advertisers does not have to be difficult. Is this the job of the turf manager? Of course not! In smaller venues, however, it might be the turf manager or nobody. The better scenario is for the turf manager to lead the effort to have advertising allowed then work to convince general management how easy it can be for them to sell it. A good start may be to give this article to your facility manager.

Every sales presentation, whether it's selling an ad or convincing someone should go on a date with you, has four elements:

Attention. First, determine who makes the buying decisions and then consider how to best get his or her attention. It might be something as simple as a printed piece that says "REACH MORE CUSTOMERS". Or, it could be a personal visit that leads off with: "I'd like to speak to you about a new way to successfully reach new potential customers at the lowest possible cost while helping your community."

Interest. You must interest them and keep them interested through the sales presentation. This is best done by doing prior research to understand the business's target audience, the buyer's motivation, and what they are currently doing for advertising. You will keep the customer engaged by asking leading questions that will later become sales points. The answer to the question: "Are more of your customers high, middle, or low income", will come back when you tell the customer how your ad will reach people in that income group.

Description. Your written piece or oral presentation will briefly describe a number of advertising options. As they are presented you'll ask leading questions such as: "If you were going to place an ad at our stadium would you be more interested in placement that is seen mostly by the local fans, the visiting fans, or both?"

Action. Close the sale. Remember the question about who the business would most like to reach? Now you'll say, "You told me

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you were most interested in reaching the visiting fans. I agree that would be best for your business. We have one space available right [here] that would do a great job with that. Another very good option is this other space. I like the first one better. Which would you prefer?" Never give them a chance to say yes or no. Always give them a choice of which to say yes to.

Selling isn't magical or mystical; it is methodical. If you believe your spectators are good people who spend money, you are doing local businesses a favor by giving them the opportunity to spend money at your facility to reach these fine folks. If there is no one in your organization capable or comfortable with selling, consider suggesting you hire someone to do the work on a commission basis.

The final element is pricing the advertising. The easiest way to do this is to compare what the competition is doing. Here are the simple steps:

Look at advertising rates of local newspaper, radio, and TV. Calculate the cost per thousand being careful to not simply use the numbers they give you. For example, if a TV commercial reaches an audience in three states but your customers only care about three towns, you have to consider the cost for that TV commercial to reach only the number of viewers in the targeted coverage area. Don't look only at viewers. Be sure to make a deduction for bathroom breaks and fast forwarding with the DVR.

Count the number of people that visit your stadium (ballpark or other venue). Try to break it down by local spectators, regional spectators, and total spectators. This can be easily done by looking at the game schedule and considering where teams come from. You can make some assumptions on the number of repeat spectators to show the total number of different people reached. Don't forget to count athletes, team staff, and practices. You'll be amazed at how these numbers add up even at the local public school level.

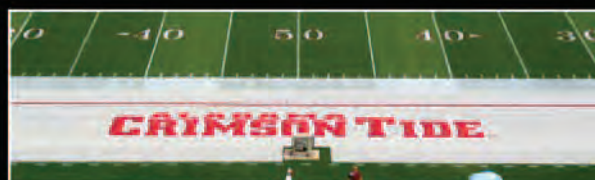
The table included here shows how to calculate Cost Per Thousand for a very small facility with very limited use. It is interesting to compare this to the earlier calculation of the \$500 newspaper advertisement with a cost per thousand of \$20. A market with 10,000 people who will actually see a newspaper advertisement should be large enough to draw at least five times more people to their stadium field than what we are using in the example below. If that were to be the case, the annual amount you could expect to ask for the Stadium Ad would be \$2,500. At that cost, your advertiser's Cost Per Thousand is still 33% lower than the newspaper... AND... they are helping the community. ■

David Kimel is the Director at Collins Perley Sports and Fitness Center in Saint Albans, VT and is a member of the Vermont Association of Broadcasters' Hall of Fame. He has owned and operated radio stations, an advertising agency, and a business consulting company with offices in seven states. Over 15 years he has led the facility to major improvements in community relations, use, renovation, and financial strength.

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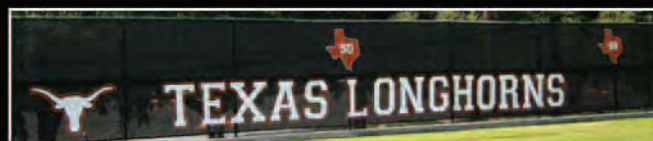
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Golf to sports turf management: not always smooth transition

Editor's note: Hal Phillips, a writer for Mandarin Media, wrote this article for his client, Lohmann Sports Fields.

JERRY KERSHASKY left Westmoor Country Club in 2011, after decades as a golf course superintendent, to assume stewardship of all the sports fields at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It was a natural hire, as part of his job involves overseeing the maintenance of University Ridge Golf Club, the 18-hole course owned, operated and maintained by the state's largest university.

Not long after he arrived in Madison, Kershasky presided over a renovation of

the UW football practice field. It was then he got a healthy taste of the differences between work in the golf world vs. work in the sports field world.

"I was called in after the whole thing was let out to bid," Kershasky recalls. "But I could see right away the sand particle size wasn't going to work. The specs were all wrong. The contractor was a landscape guy who didn't understand these things"—specifically, the field wouldn't drain properly if the sand materials specified for the renovation don't match the

◀ **GREEN**, unadorned open space is the soccer field at UWisconsin.

sand in the existing subsoil, so far as particle size is concerned."

The way Kershasky tells it, the contractor who had secured the bid was none too pleased, and part of his distaste stemmed from the idea that some former golf course superintendent was lecturing him, condescending to him, actually, on the "basics" of turf drainage.

"We get a bit of that, but generally we see acceptance of new practices when the desired results are achieved, which is how it should be," says Jim Lohmann of Lohmann Sports Fields (LSF), a division of the Illinois-based Lohmann Companies, which includes both a course architecture division (Lohmann Golf Designs) and a course construction division (Golf Creations).

While golf business has bottomed out and looks to have begun a slow recovery, the 20-year course-building boom that started in 1985 created a glut of course superintendents and course contractors. The golf industry declined when the national economy declined, circa 2008, and many of those superintendents and contractors have migrated into the sports turf management and construction industries.

"We got into the sports field business in 2003, when it was already catching up to golf in terms of agronomic sophistication, technology and professionalism—and by that I mean the prequalification of contractors and such," Lohmann says. "There's still a gap, but the more firms with golf backgrounds get into sports turf, and the more those techniques are adopted and/or adapted, the more that gap is closing."

Most agree that golf industry training is a plus with its emphasis on promoting subsurface drainage and overall plant health, and that sports turf management is generally better for this injection of agronomic and drainage expertise.

"I never think it's a bad thing to see a well educated group descend on another area of the turfgrass industry," says Sports Turf Managers Association President Michael Goatley, PhD, a professor and extension turfgrass specialist at Virginia Tech University. "There are

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

John Mascaro is President of Turf-Tec International

Can you identify this sports turf problem?

Problem: Blue/gray area on turf

Turfgrass area: Professional stadium field

Location: Denver, CO

Grass Variety: Perennial ryegrass

Answer to John Mascaro's Photo Quiz on Page 33



Background illustration courtesy of istockphoto.com

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▲ **Top: THE STRATEGY PLAN** for the Lakes Community HS football field. **Bottom: INSTALLED DRAINAGE** at Fifth Third Stadium, home of the West Michigan Whitecaps.

drainage systems that rely largely on sand. “And we went kind of crazy-overboard with drainage on athletic fields for a while,” she said. “But you can’t play football on a beach. You’re not going to maintain a good football field in 100 percent sand.”

Dr. Goatley concurred: “I think that many of the golf turf managers have probably been a little more in tune with spoon-feeding fertilization programs and attention to detail in irrigation management,” he said. “However, they will have to gain experience in the different types of traffic between the different types of players and equipment on the turf, as there is great disparity between the traffic imparted on a golf green vs. that of a heavily trafficked athletic field. And probably the biggest edge trained sports turf managers will have is skin-area management, for baseball and softball fields. There are equal parts art and science in this area of sports turf management, and the ‘art’ must be gained by ex-

perience and by training with a skilled dirt manager.

“Many of the principles in construction are the same... some of the soil mediums change due to the necessity for varying soil strengths, drainage, etc., but I think contractors who know their business will apply their knowledge equally well in both areas. It’s no surprise that a constant theme for success in both areas is drainage, drainage, and drainage.”

RESOURCES ARE KEY

Jim Lohmann would add three more key words: resources, resources, resources.

Lohmann Sports Fields cut its teeth in the sports turf business by handling high school

and park district projects. It has grown to the point where it works with large universities, including a renovation of the new varsity soccer field at Wisconsin-Madison, for Kershasky, and resodding the famed gridiron at Notre Dame Stadium. LSF has also built minor league baseball diamonds across the Midwest.

But the firm still handles school and park district projects, and it’s here that Lohmann feels the golf background is even more applicable because it often brings with it cost efficiencies, and ongoing agronomic consultation.

“These schools don’t have a lot of resources, so if the job isn’t done properly, it ends up costing them a fortune,” he says. “People will call me and say, ‘We have 3-year-old field and it’s not draining.’ First thing I’ll say is, ‘Are you aerifying?’”

A good example is Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa, IL where the school, through a local contractor, built a brand new football field that experienced serious drainage and settling issues before its first season had even finished. It had a huge crown on it, which, according to Lohmann, is usually a good sign that whoever built it was relying on surface drainage—which means the contractor probably didn’t equip it with enough sub-surface drainage.

“We came in and stripped between hash marks and incorporated 500 tons of sand, rototilled it in and herringbone-drained the middle of the field,” he says. “We mellowed out the crown and it’s been great. They love it but they spent money with us they didn’t need to spend, if the build had been done properly the first time. A big university might be able to take a hit like that, but high schools can’t.”

LSF revisits Lakes Community every year to aerify and topdress the field, a mainstay of every golf maintenance regimen. “You can effectively enhance drainage in a topsoil field but if you don’t aerify, it will get hard and create a layer that water won’t get through,” Lohmann says. “You’ve got to break up that

several former golf superintendents that I work with, here in Virginia, who switched careers into sports turf management long before the economic downturn. They are all very successful sports turf managers.”

But there are tensions and sport-specific nuances to be managed, as sports turf managers and sports turf contractors deal with what many golf-educated superintendents and contractors see as a new, higher standard of expertise.

Amy Fouty, the sports turf manager at Michigan State University since 2003, spent 17 years in the golf business before moving over to sports turf. (In fact, she’s married to a course superintendent.) “When I started on this side of the business, I thought ‘This is gonna be really easy’ having come from a golf background. But it’s not been that way at all. It’s different. Different conditions, different challenges.”

Fouty noted that over the past 20 years, golf courses have moved strongly toward

You can run into all sorts of problems if you’re dealing with a landscape company that hasn’t properly built a field before

material and fill in the holes with sand to maintain a porous soil profile.

“But that costs money, too, and school districts may not have the money, equipment or manpower to do this sort of thing. We’ve encouraged quite a few to share [aerification] equipment. Park districts, too. It’s also pretty common for us to help school and park district clients with ongoing fertilization programs. Without huge resources, you’ve got to get creative sometimes.”

Kershasky is an unabashed proponent of using golf contractors in sports field construction. LSF rebuilt the new soccer field in Madison and Nebraska-based Landscapes Unlimited, another course builder that has expanded into sports fields, rebuilt Wisconsin’s new softball field. Kershasky is confident his staff of turf managers can manage “finished” turf just fine going forward. But contractors? He wants someone with golf expertise involved, and the earlier the better.

“Having a Lohmann or Landscapes there merely to help write the specs is a big advantage from the get-go. They know and understand what they’re bidding on,” Kershasky says. “You can run into all sorts of problems if you’re dealing with a landscape company that hasn’t properly built a field before. That’s what happened on our football practice field.

“Basically, people who’ve been trained in golf course management, if they’ve gone to Penn State or an ag school, for example, they understand all those basics, even if they’re working in construction. Contractors like Lohmann push all those things. They understand it. They understand all sands and soils are not created equals. They understand if you just spec ‘sand,’ for example, you can really screw the thing up.”

Kershasky returned to the sand issue: What if you can’t get the right sand locally? “Well, it changes the price. As a state system, we have many hoops to jump through in the bidding process. It just emphasizes why you have to do it properly.”

This sort of attitude surely stirs resentment in those contractors who don’t bring golf cred to the table.

“Some of them are resentful,” Kershasky says. “But if you can prove a

method is better, that what you say is true, they come around. If you go and take a core and you see the roots are all in the top quarter inch, and you squeeze it and the water is just dripping out rather than passing through the profile, then they get it. But yeah, initially, they say ‘What the heck! They’re just talking big.’”

Fouty agrees with Kershasky that the biggest gap persists in the area of construction: Your typical golf contractors continue to bring more to the table when compared to your typical sports field contractors, many of whom have landscape backgrounds. However, she thinks the difference between sports field managers and golf course superintendents is overplayed and is fading away due to an uptick in sports turf education.

“Time management, organization and communication skills—those are the big things that I brought with me from golf to this job. A better working knowledge of chemicals, types of fertilizer... you just deal with more products in golf,” she says.

“But today, sports turf management kids are far better educated at the college level. You used to be considered a sort of outdoor janitor at a stadium. Of course, a long time ago, you just mowed the grass and you were considered a superintendent. Things evolve.”

Dr. Goatley said that collegiate golf-turf programs were, for a very long time, far more popular and prevalent. So it’s no surprise there has been a migration of personnel from golf to sports turf.

“But student interest has changed over my career as an educator, with golf still attracting the larger number of students, but with an increasing interest in sports turf management training,” he said. “And for those who are moving from golf turf into sports turf, getting involved in their local STMA chapters and getting to know their fellow sports turf managers will benefit everyone. Both groups have expertise that will benefit their peers. But one group needs to reach out and another needs to be receptive.” ■

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The first “pitch” at Busch Stadium

I NEVER IMAGINED that in my lifetime I would have the privilege of doing the first pitch at Busch Stadium in St. Louis for a crowd of more than 48,000 fans. But that is exactly what happened last May.

Busch Stadium hosted two of the most storied teams in English premier league soc-

cer, Chelsea and Manchester City. It was a sellout crowd for the first non-baseball sporting events held at Busch Stadium since the venue opened in 2006. There were 48,263 fans in attendance, which is the largest crowd to ever attend a sporting event at Busch Stadium.

Bush Sports Turf was chosen to collabo-

rate with Busch Stadium head groundskeeper Billy Findley and vice president of stadium operations Joe Abernathy to convert the stadium from baseball field to soccer pitch—and then back to baseball field—in a 6-day timeframe. Our mission was to squeeze a 100 meter by 65 meter soccer field into Busch Stadium. It would require removing the pitcher’s mound and infield clay, and sodding these areas along with the four corners of the field, which would be on the warning track, and then quickly turning the pitch back to a baseball field.

There was a forecast for scattered thunderstorms forecast on every day leading up to the match, so immediately after the Cardinals played an afternoon game May 19, Findley and his crew removed all of the conditioner from the infield dirt and covered the infield with the tarp. Without any extra time to work with, it was critical that the dirt not get saturated. With 48,000 fans attending the Thursday game, the field simply had to be ready. To throw us a curveball, they added an exhibition practice to Wednesday night, meaning the field would essentially need to be done a day earlier than the original plan called for.

PRE-GAME

We had been planning this conversion for months, and had decided to use thick-cut, 1.25-inch, sand-based sod from Heath Sod Farm in Wisconsin. We chose Heath in part because they were a regional supplier, which would save time and cost related to transportation. We also wanted a turf similar in color and density to the rest of the field, and that was grown on a sand-based root zone. We were concerned that using a native-soil sod could give us problems if it rained. As another measure for avoiding problems, we put a 6-mil, fiber-reinforced plastic under the sod to keep the infield dirt underneath from getting wet. This would also allow any excess water to reach the edges, where it could get into the sand rootzone.

Our crew moved in first thing Monday morning and started removing the infield dirt. Findley and I were determined to provide a smooth playing surface without any noticeable transitions. We decided to take 1.25 inches of infield material out in



▲ **Top: THE FINISHED PRODUCT.** Photo by Taka Yanagimoto. **Above Left: REMOVING THE INFIELD** with a Terraplane rotor. Photo by Taka Yanagimoto. **Above Right: REMOVING THE PITCHING MOUND.** Photo by Taka Yanagimoto/St. Louis Cardinals.